Met Office

April 2011

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

With areas of high pressure over or near to the UK for much of the month, there was plenty of fine, warm weather. The UK mean temperature was 3.3 °C above the 1981-2010 average and it was the warmest April in the series from 1910, being 0.5 °C warmer than April 2007 which is now ranked second. In central England, it was the warmest April for over 350 years. The daily maximum temperatures in particular were well above average, by over 5 °C in south-east England. Rainfall was close to or above normal over much of western Scotland, but elsewhere it was dry - exceptionally so over much of southern, central and eastern England where less than 10% of normal rainfall was recorded; it was the second successive very dry month in these areas. It was the sixth driest April over England in a series from 1910, and in East Anglia only April 2007 was drier. It was a sunny month across all of the UK, with amounts generally close to 150% of normal, making it the third sunniest April in the series from 1929.

A maximum temperature of 27.8 °C was recorded at Wisley, Surrey on 23rd. A minimum temperature of -5.4 °C was recorded at Tulloch Bridge, Highland early on 26th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 on 5th, 95.8 mm of rainfall was recorded at Honister Pass, Cumbria. In marked contrast, a few places in south-east England recorded no rain for the whole month. A wind gust of 71 mph was recorded at Blackford Hill, Edinburgh on 2nd.

Weather Impacts

The fine, warm weather resulted in early displays of Spring flowers and tree blossom. It also gave a boost to tourism and outdoor activities, especially as it coincided with the school holidays and Easter weekend. However, the lack of rainfall meant that flows in many rivers across England and Wales were very low and, if the dry conditions persist, will cause concerns for farmers, growers and gardeners later.

Easter Saturday (23rd) saw temperatures peak around 27 °C in south-east England - the highest in April since 1949. However, thundery showers broke out in parts of eastern England that day; some roads and shops in Sheffield were left under several inches of water after intense rain and hail overwhelmed drains. There were further isolated thundery showers towards month-end, but fortunately the weather during the Royal Wedding and the associated celebrations on the 29th was again largely dry and fine.

England diary of highlights

With high pressure influencing the weather for most of the month, it was much warmer, drier and sunnier than normal. The mean temperature was 3.4 °C above the 1981-2010 average and it was the warmest April in the series from 1910, being 0.6 °C warmer than April 2007 (now ranked second). In central England, it was the warmest April for over 350 years. The daily maximum temperatures in particular were well above normal, by over 5 °C in the south-east. Rainfall was below normal in all areas - exceptionally so over much of southern, central and eastern England where less than 10% of normal rainfall was recorded. It was the second successive very dry month in these areas. Much of eastern, central and south-east England recorded less than 5mm of rain. It was the sixth driest April in the series from 1910 and in East Anglia only April 2007 was drier. Sunshine amounts were generally around 150% of normal, making it the sunniest April in the series from 1929.

1st to 5th

A mild southerly flow was replaced by a cooler westerly one on 2nd as a cold front moved eastwards. Overnight into 2nd, thundery rain spread northwards into the south-west and later into northern areas. As the cloud cleared it become warm in East Anglia with a high of 20.3 °C at Writtle (Essex). More heavy showers followed on 3rd with thunder, except in the south-east where it remained dry. A cold night followed with -0.2 °C at Topcliffe (North Yorkshire). A very wet day in Cumbria on 5th, with 102 mm recorded at Seathwaite (Cumbria) between midnight on 4th and midday on 5th.

6th to 11th

After further heavy rain overnight into 6th, high pressure brought a period of dry, sunny weather with light winds and above normal temperatures. There were some mild nights, with a minimum of 13.4 °C at Boulmer (Northumberland) early on 6th. The sunshine in the south helped the temperature rise to 23.6 °C at St James's Park (London) on 6th. It was very warm for April for much of this period with temperatures rising above 20 °C each day. Another weak front produced some patchy rain in northern areas on 11th but elsewhere it stayed dry and warm, with 21.5 °C at Shoeburyness (Essex).

12th to 16th

Becoming less settled with some outbreaks of showery rain, chiefly in the north and west. A cold night into 12th saw an air frost in parts of the Midlands. Some showers spread into eastern coasts during the day with the best of the sunshine in the south-west. Daytime temperatures were close to normal. Another local frost on the morning of 13th with -0.7 °C at Benson (Oxfordshire). The day became cloudy with some patchy rain. Although some parts started misty on 14th and 15th, the cloud soon broke but with a few light showers. On 16th a few showers again broke out across East Anglia but most parts stayed dry with a high of 19.1 °C at Astwood Bank (Worcestershire).

17th to 24th

Pressure then built again, with a warm, south-easterly air flow. It was dry with sunshine on 17th after early mist and fog cleared and it became warm again with 21.1 °C at Wisley (Surrey). The 18th was another generally sunny, warm day with 19.9 °C at Blackpool (Lancashire). A chilly start to 19th with -0.7 °C at Exeter airport (Devon) but then further sunny, very warm weather with temperatures reaching 25 °C in the London area. Some sea fog affected North Sea coasts on 20th and 21st but temperatures again reached 24 to 25 °C in the south-east. Some fog and frost in the north-east early on 22nd with -0.4 °C at Redesdale Camp (Northumberland). Showers and thunderstorms then affected the south-west but it was very warm and sunny in the south-east with 26.9 °C at St James's Park. The heat peaked on 23rd with 27.8 °C at Wisley (Surrey), making it the warmest April day since 1949. The high temperatures sparked off heavy showers and thunderstorms with some locally torrential downpours; Santon Downham (Norfolk) reported 19.8 mm in one hour. The 24th stayed fine, with 25.3 °C at Solent (Hampshire).

25th to 26th

A cold front across northern areas weakened as it moved southwards, bringing some cloud and rain. The 25th was another very warm day in the south with 24.0 °C at Solent but sea fog affected the coast of East Anglia. Outbreaks of rain moved southwards on 26th into southern England with everywhere becoming cooler.

27th to 30th

Another generally dry spell with an easterly flow becoming established. A few showers developed along eastern then southern coasts and isolated thunderstorms affected the south Midlands on 29th, but otherwise it was generally dry with some sunshine. Although most parts were again dry and sunny on 30th, a line of thunderstorms broke out through central Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset.

Wales diary of highlights

A changeable first week then plenty of warm, fine weather, especially after mid-month. The mean temperature for the month was 3.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average and it was the warmest April in the series from 1910, being 0.5 °C warmer than April 2007 (now ranked second). The daytime maximum temperatures in particular were well above average, by over 5 °C in the south-east. Rainfall was below normal, especially so over much of south, east and mid-Wales where less than 30% of normal rainfall was recorded. It was the ninth driest April over Wales in the series from 1910. Sunshine amounts were around 140% of normal, making it the third sunniest April in the series from 1929.

1st to 6th

Bands of rain and showers crossed Wales, heavy and thundery at times, especially on 1st and 2nd, then again on 5th and 6th. The heaviest rain was over Snowdonia. However, higher pressure to the south and south-west pushed northwards at times to give some lengthy drier, brighter spells, especially on 3rd and 4th and again later on 6th. Very windy for a time, with a gust of 59 mph recorded at Capel Curig (Conwy) on 5th. Temperatures were below average in the wetter spells but, for most areas, it was warm or very warm for April, with some record high overnight minima recorded.

7th to 12th

High pressure dominated this period giving predominantly dry weather with bright or sunny spells, although mist and fog plagued coasts at times and rain or showers moved in during 11th. Quite cool nights but, by day, temperatures were well above average, with Porthmadog (Gwynedd) recording 22.5 °C on 9th. After 11th, it turned fresher but otherwise temperatures were mostly near or a little above normal.

13th to 16th

Conditions were more unsettled, with a succession of fronts bringing cloud, rain or showers at times, the rain heaviest and most persistent on 13th. However, there were also some lengthy dry spells. Temperatures were generally lower than the previous week, being near or below average with some night frosts in rural areas.

17th to 22nd

High pressure brought a return of mainly dry, warm conditions with a good deal of sunshine. Mist or fog affected coasts at times and there were isolated showers during the afternoons. As the high pressure edged away to the east, a general southerly or south-easterly flow brought very warm conditions by day; Pembrey Sands (Carmarthenshire) recorded 24.4 °C on 21st and Mumbles Head (Swansea) 21.3 °C on 22nd. There were some chilly nights, though.

23rd to 30th

There was another brief unsettled interlude on 23rd, as a frontal rain band moved in from the west and heavy showers and thunderstorms were set off. Then pressure built once again for the last week, bringing mainly settled, dry conditions with a good deal of sunshine. There was a little rain in the south late on 26th and isolated showers. Temperatures, once again, were above average during the day, with Pembrey Sands reaching 22.0 °C on 30th, but the clear skies and light winds gave chilly nights, with -3.7 °C recorded at Sennybridge (Powys) early on 28th. A notable feature was the strength of the easterly winds from 28th, with gusts of 35 to 45 mph reported widely.

Scotland diary of highlights

Changeable until mid-month then settled and mainly dry, with several warm days. The mean temperature for the month was 3.0 °C above the 1981-2010 average and it was the warmest April in the series from 1910, being 0.2 °C warmer than April 2007 (now ranked second). The daily maximum temperatures in particular were well above average, by as much as 5 °C in north-east Scotland. Rainfall was close to or somewhat above

normal over much of western Scotland, but elsewhere it was dry, especially towards the east coast where less than 30% of normal rainfall was recorded. Sunshine amounts were well above normal, typically around 140%, making it one of the sunniest Aprils in the series from 1929.

1st to 8th

Wet and windy in the west on 1st, but mainly dry and warm in the east. Early rain cleared to leave a bright day with a few showers on 2nd. Bright with showers on 3rd. The 4th started dry, but rain spread eastwards during the morning, heavy in the west, with drier weather following. Mainly cloudy on 5th with rain at times in the south and west, but drier and brighter in the east. Heavy rain over the western Highlands on 6th gave 24-hour totals of over 40 mm in places; 158 mm was recorded at Achnagart (Highland) in the 48 hours to 0900 GMT on 7th. The east was dry, sunny and warm on 6th with 21.1 °C at Fyvie Castle (Aberdeenshire). Some light rain in the far north-west and Northern Isles on 7th and 8th, but dry with sunny spells in the east and south-east.

9th to 10th

Dry with long clear or sunny spells on 9th, although low cloud and fog affected the extreme east coast and Shetland. Dry and sunny for most on 10th, with a maximum temperature of 23.3 °C at Fyvie Castle.

11th to 15th

Cooler on 11th as early rain cleared to sunny spells and scattered showers, with maximum temperatures around 14 °C. Bright on 12th with sunny spells and occasional showers. The 13th, 14th and 15th saw patchy, mainly light rain or drizzle at times but also some drier, brighter interludes.

16th to 30th

Mainly dry and rather cloudy on 16th. Mainly dry on 17th and 18th with sunny spells in most places, but some haar in the east, and later on 18th occasional light showers developed. The 19th saw scattered showers in the north while the south was mostly sunny with patchy haar along North Sea coasts. The 20th, 21st and 22nd were mainly dry and warm with sunny intervals, but haar lingered in the east and in the Northern Isles. Maximum temperatures on 22nd ranged from 23.5 °C at Prestwick (Ayrshire) to 9.9 °C at Leuchars (Fife), while an early frost was recorded at Braemar (Aberdeenshire). Showery rain developed in the south-west and west during the evening, which spread eastwards through 23rd with bright then clear spells following. Early frost in Aberdeenshire and Dumfries-shire on 24th with bright spells, although thickening cloud brought a little rain south-eastwards. The rain cleared during the morning of 25th with bright spells following from the north-west. Most places were dry on 26th with plenty of sunshine, although some light showers developed over the Cairngorms. Most places were dry on 27th with long sunny spells, but patchy light rain affected the north-west later. The 28th was cloudier in the north-west with patchy rain, but elsewhere it was sunny. Dry and sunny and clear overnight on 29th and 30th, with the temperature at Lusa (Skye) reaching 22.1 °C on 29th and 21.6 °C on 30th, while onshore winds kept eastern coasts much cooler.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Changeable during the first week then mainly settled and dry, with several warm days. The mean temperature for the month was 3.0 °C above the 1981-2010 average and it was the warmest April in the series from 1910, being 0.4 °C warmer than April 2007 (now ranked second). It was much drier than normal, with typically about 50% of average rainfall. Sunshine amounts were generally about 130% of normal, making it one of the sunniest Aprils in the series from 1929 and similar to April 2007.

1st to 6th

Mainly dry and mild, but fairly cloudy with some drizzle at first on 1st. A bright day on 2nd with showers, some thundery during the evening. The 3rd remained bright with a few showers. Heavy rain during the morning of

4th, then drier in the afternoon before heavier rain returned in the evening. The 5th was rather cloudy with patchy light rain. Rain at first on 6th and again during the evening, otherwise warm with sunshine, 19.4 °C being recorded at Helens Bay (County Down).

7th to 10th

The 7th was dry, cloudy overnight but sunny spells during the day. Another fine, dry day on 8th with some good sunny spells. Dry with long clear or sunny spells on 9th and 10th, with a maximum temperature of 21.7 °C at Ballykelly (County Londonderry) on 10th.

11th to 15th

Cooler, as early rain cleared to sunny spells and scattered showers on 11th, with maximum temperatures around 12 °C. It was bright with scattered showers on 12th after a chilly start, before thickening cloud and patchy rain in the evening. The 13th remained mostly cloudy with rain through much of the morning, turning patchy later. The 14th was mainly dry and rather cloudy. Dry, bright start on 15th, then cloudy with a little light rain during the afternoon and evening.

16th to 30th

The 16th to 21st were dry with clear or sunny spells and overnight mist. Sunny spells on 22nd and 23rd but also the occasional heavy shower. An early frost at Katesbridge (County Down) on 24th with bright spells at first across the south and east. Thickening cloud brought a few spots of rain southwards through the 25th, brightening up for a time in the north. The 26th to 30th were fine and dry with clear or sunny spells, with Ballykelly reaching 19.8 °C on 30th, though the nights were colder with some patchy frost.

Last updated: 2 August 2013

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